



Doing Business in Estonia: 2010

Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies

INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT, U.S. & FOREIGN COMMERCIAL SERVICE AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 2010. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES.

- [Chapter 1: Doing Business in Estonia](#)
- [Chapter 2: Political and Economic Environment](#)
- [Chapter 3: Selling U.S. Products and Services](#)
- [Chapter 4: Leading Sectors for U.S. Export and Investment](#)
- [Chapter 5: Trade Regulations and Standards](#)
- [Chapter 6: Investment Climate](#)
- [Chapter 7: Trade and Project Financing](#)
- [Chapter 8: Business Travel](#)
- [Chapter 9: Contacts, Market Research and Trade Events](#)
- [Chapter 10: Guide to Our Services](#)

Chapter 1: Doing Business in Estonia

- [Market Overview](#)
- [Market Challenges](#)
- [Market Opportunities](#)
- [Market Entry Strategy](#)

Market Overview

[Return to top](#)

- Since regaining independence in 1991, Estonia has transformed itself into a highly motivated and dynamic center of commerce. The business environment has blossomed, thanks mainly to the stability of the political situation and the sound economic policies of the government. Estonia achieved its overriding foreign policy goals of the past decade when it acceded to both NATO and the European Union in the spring of 2004. The accession process is currently underway for Estonia to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- After enjoying 8 percent average annual GDP growth since 2000, the economy started to show signs of cooling in 2007 when GDP growth slowed to 6.3 percent. The global financial and economic crisis caused Estonian GDP to shrink 3.6 percent in 2008 and by an estimated 13.7 percent in 2009. GDP growth is expected to be around 0 percent in 2010. The unemployment rate increased to 14.6 percent in the 3rd quarter of 2009 and is expected to continue increasing in the first half of 2010.
- The economic crisis brought inflation down to 0.2 percent in 2009, according to Eurostat's January 2010 estimate, compared to 10.6 percent in 2008. High inflation had been the main obstacle to Estonia meeting the Maastricht criteria for euro adoption by 2011 – a top priority of the government. With inflation coming down, Estonia's attention switched to another Euro accession criteria – the budget deficit. In 2009 the Estonian government approved several budget cuts to keep its budget deficit to less than 3 percent of GDP as specified in the Maastricht Criteria. Reports from the government of Estonia and Eurostat in the spring of 2010 will show if those measures were enough to keep the budget deficit within Maastricht's guidelines. The European Council (EC) and European Central Bank (ECB) will make assessments of Estonia's euro readiness in April-May and the EC's Economic and Financial Affairs Council is expected to make the final decision on Estonia's euro accession in June.
- Being a small country of 1.3 million, Estonia relies for commercial success on its greatest natural asset -- geography. Estonia lies just south of Finland and across the Baltic Sea from Sweden. To the east is the potential market of northwest Russia. After Estonia regained its independence in 1991, Russia imposed a non-favorable tariff regime for Estonian imports, which caused most local businesses to shift their export markets to European countries. This situation began to

change after May 1, 2004, when Estonia joined the EU, and Russia lifted its double-tariff regime on Estonian products. This has increased considerably the level of Estonian business interest toward the Russian market. Estonia's membership in the EU has increased Russian business interest in Estonia as well. Sound, liberal economic policies and an excellent business climate have ensured high levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Estonia. Companies partly or wholly owned by foreigners account for one-third of Estonian GDP and over 50 percent of the country's exports. Scandinavian countries are the largest foreign direct investors in Estonia. Sweden accounts for 37 percent of total FDI, followed by Finland with 25 percent, and the Netherlands with 9 percent. The United States provides 1.7 percent of Estonia's FDI (10th overall).

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Foreign Trade Division, in 2008 the principal imports from the United States were electric apparatus and machinery, measuring and testing instruments, audio-visual equipment, passenger cars, and medical equipment. Estonian membership in the EU has not had major bilateral trade implications for the United States, although this membership is disadvantageous for some U.S. exports. Estonia's main trading partners are Finland, Sweden, Germany and Russia. The U.S. share in trade is about 1 percent.

Market Challenges

[Return to top](#)

- Estonia has a small domestic market, with only 1.3 million people.
- The primary competition for American companies in the Estonian marketplace is European, especially Finnish and Swedish companies.

Market Opportunities

[Return to top](#)

Estonia's business attitude towards the United States is positive and business relations between the United States and Estonia are increasingly significant. Over the next several years, major growth is likely in services, especially in the telecommunications, transportation and energy sectors.

Market Entry Strategy

[Return to top](#)

All market entry strategies are applicable.

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 2: Political and Economic Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please click on the link below to the U.S. Department of State Background Notes.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5377.htm>

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 3: Selling U.S. Products and Services

- [Using an Agent or Distributor](#)
- [Establishing an Office](#)
- [Franchising](#)
- [Direct Marketing](#)
- [Joint Ventures/Licensing](#)
- [Selling to the Government](#)
- [Distribution and Sales Channels](#)
- [Selling Factors/Techniques](#)
- [Electronic Commerce](#)
- [Trade Promotion and Advertising](#)
- [Pricing](#)
- [Sales Service/Customer Support](#)
- [Protecting Your Intellectual Property](#)
- [Due Diligence](#)
- [Local Professional Services](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

Using an Agent or Distributor

[Return to top](#)

One exclusive agent/distributor is usually appointed to cover the entire country. Estonian importers often represent several different product lines. In selecting a representative, the exporter should check whether that company handles competing products.

It is recommended that U.S. companies seeking agents, distributors, or partners in Estonia contact local trade associations for a list of importers or the [Political/Economic Section of the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn](#).

Local Yellow Pages also have information in English:

Ekspress Hotline: <http://www.1182.ee/eng/>

Infopluss: <http://www.infopluss.ee/kontakt.php?lang=en&pohi=on>

Establishing an Office

[Return to top](#)

All questions concerning establishing an office in Estonia are covered by the Enterprise Estonia Investment Guide: <http://www.investinestonia.com/investment-guide>.

Franchising

[Return to top](#)

Estonia's legal system provides for trademark protection and licensing provisions. Franchisors should consider the small size of the market when making their agreement requirements.

Direct Marketing

[Return to top](#)

There is a wide range of EU legislation that impacts the direct marketing sector. Compliance requirements are stiffest for marketing and sales to private consumers. Companies need to focus, in particular, on the clarity and completeness of the information they provide to consumers prior to purchase, and on their approaches to collecting and using customer data. The following gives a brief overview of the most important provisions flowing from EU-wide rules on distance selling and on-line commerce. It is worth noting that the EU is currently overhauling its consumer protection legislation. Companies are advised to consult the information available via the hyperlinks, to check the relevant sections of national Country Commercial Guides, and to contact the Commercial Service at the U.S. Mission to the European Union for more specific guidance.

Processing Customer Data

The EU has strict laws governing the protection of personal data, including the use of such data in the context of direct marketing activities. For more information on these rules, please see

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/privacy/index_en.htm

Distance Selling Rules

- Distance and Door-to-Door sales
The EU's Directive on distance selling to consumers (97/7/EC and amendments) sets out a number of obligations for companies doing business at a distance with consumers. It can read like a set of onerous "do's" and "don'ts," but in many ways it represents nothing more than a customer relations good practice guide with legal effect. Direct marketers must provide clear information on the identity of themselves as well as their supplier, full details on prices including delivery costs, and the period for which an offer remains valid – all of this, of course, before a contract is concluded. Customers generally have the right to return goods without any required explanation within seven days, and retain the right to compensation for faulty goods thereafter. Similar in nature is the Doorstep Directive (85/577/EEC) which is designed to protect consumers from sales occurring outside of a normal business premises (e.g., door-to-door sales) and essentially assure the fairness of resulting contracts.

Key Link: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/cons_int/safe_shop/index_en.htm

- Distance Selling of Financial Services

Financial services are the subject of a separate Directive that came into force in June 2002 (2002/65/EC). This piece of legislation amends three prior existing Directives and is designed to ensure that consumers are appropriately protected in respect to financial transactions taking place where the consumer and the provider are not face-to-face. In addition to prohibiting certain abusive marketing practices, the Directive establishes criteria for the presentation of contract information. Given the special nature of financial markets, specifics are also laid out for contractual withdrawal.

Key Link: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002L0065:EN:NOT>

Direct Marketing over the Internet

The e-commerce Directive (2000/31/EC) imposes certain specific requirements connected to the direct marketing business. Promotional offers must not mislead customers and the terms that must be met to qualify for them have to be easily accessible and clear. The Directive stipulates that marketing e-mails must be identified as such to the recipient and requires that companies targeting customers on-line must regularly consult national opt-out registers where they exist. When an order is placed, the service provider must acknowledge receipt quickly and by electronic means, although the Directive does not attribute any legal effect to the placing of an order or its acknowledgment. This is a matter for national law. Vendors of electronically supplied services (such as software, which the EU considers a service and not a good) must also collect value added tax (see Electronic Commerce section below).

Key Link: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/e-commerce/index_en.htm

Joint Ventures/Licensing

[Return to top](#)

Joint ventures and licensing arrangements with foreign manufacturers are allowed and encouraged. Over 100 U.S. companies have established themselves in the Estonian market with subsidiaries or joint ventures.

Selling to the Government

[Return to top](#)

The U.S. and the EU are signatories of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Government Procurement Agreement (GPA), which grants access to most public supplies and some services and works contracts published by national procuring authorities of the countries that are parties to the Agreement. In practice, this means that U.S.-based companies are eligible to bid on supplies and services contracts from European public contracting authorities above the agreed thresholds.

However, there are restrictions for U.S. suppliers in the EU utilities sector both in the EU Utilities Directive and in the EU coverage of the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA). The Utilities Directive allows EU contracting authorities in these sectors to either reject non-EU bids where the proportion of goods originating in non-EU countries exceeds 50% of the total value of the goods constituting the tender, or is entitled to apply a 3% price difference to non-EU bids in order to give preference to the EU bid. These

restrictions are applied when no reciprocal access for EU companies in the U.S. market is offered. Those restrictions however were waived for the electricity sector.

For more information, please visit the U.S. Commercial Service at the U.S. Mission to the European Union website dedicated to EU public procurement. This site also has a database of all European public procurement tenders that are open to U.S.-based firms by virtue of the Government Procurement Agreement. Access is free of charge.

Key Link: http://www.buyusa.gov/europeanunion/eu_tenders.html

Government procurement in Estonia is governed by the Public Procurement Act (PPA), which came into force in 2001. The objects of public procurement are goods, services, construction work, construction work concessions and design solutions.

PPA in English: <http://www.rha.gov.ee/?id=1175>

On January 1, 2004, the new public procurement register went into force. In order to be able to enter a procurement notice, invitation to tender or any other document in the register, the contracting authority has to register with the registry by contacting: <http://www.rha.gov.ee/>

All EU government tender notices can be viewed in English at: <http://ted.europa.eu>

Distribution and Sales Channels

[Return to top](#)

Distribution channels in Estonia are similar to those in the United States market. Goods may be sold through an agent, distributor, established wholesaler, or by selling directly to retail organizations. Businesses and most logistic services are concentrated in and around Tallinn.

Selling Factors/Techniques

[Return to top](#)

Selling factors and techniques are very similar to those in the United States. Terms generally applied to international trade with EU countries apply to selling in Estonia.

Electronic Commerce

[Return to top](#)

In July 2003, the EU started applying Value Added Tax (VAT) to sales by non-EU based companies of Electronically Supplied Services (ESS) to EU based non-business customers. U.S. companies that are covered by the rule must collect and submit VAT to EU tax authorities. European Council Directive 2002/38/EC further developed the EU rules for charging Value Added Tax. These rules were indefinitely extended following adoption of directive 2008/8/EC

U.S. businesses mainly affected by the 2003 rule change are those that are U.S. based and selling ESS to EU based, non-business customers or those businesses that are EU based and selling ESS to customers outside the EU who no longer need to charge VAT on these transactions. There are a number of compliance options for businesses. The Directive created a special scheme that simplifies registering with each Member State. The Directive allows companies to register with a single VAT authority of their choice.

Companies have to charge different rates of VAT according to where their customers are based but VAT reports and returns are submitted to just one authority. The VAT authority responsible for providing the single point of registration service is then responsible for reallocating the collected revenue among the other EU VAT authorities.

Key Link: http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/taxation/vat/how_vat_works/e-services/index_en.htm

In Estonia there are a number of Internet shops offering books, publications, tools, household goods, software and hardware, flowers and multimedia products. It is possible also to book and buy air and ferry tickets on-line or purchase tickets to various entertainment events. However, according to a December 2009 Eurostat study, while the share of Internet users in Estonia is above the European Union average, only 17 percent of Estonians had purchased goods or services for themselves online.

Trade Promotion and Advertising

[Return to top](#)

General Legislation

Advertising in Estonia is regulated by the Advertising Act:

<http://www.legaltext.ee/et/andmebaas/tekst.asp?loc=text&dok=XXX0044&keel=en&pg=1&ptyyp=RT&tyyp=X&query=reklaam>

Web links

Media contacts: [Estonian](#) printed media: <http://www.eall.ee/members.html>

The Association of Estonian Broadcasters: <http://www.ringhliit.ee/eng/member.html>

Most international fairs take place at the grounds of Estonian Fairs, Ltd., located in Tallinn: www.fair.ee

Pricing

[Return to top](#)

Customs duties information can be found from the Estonian Master Tariff System:

<https://vaarikas.emta.ee/emts/do/language?lang=en>

Excise tax is levied on raw tobacco and cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos; alcohol and beer; gasoline, diesel oil, jet fuel, and lubricating engine oil; cars, motorcycles, and yachts; and packaging.

Nearly all imports, as well as domestic production, are subject to the Value Added Tax of 20% (VAT)

More on taxes: <http://tradewithestonia.com/trade-guide.html>

Sales Service/Customer Support

[Return to top](#)

Conscious of the discrepancies among Member States in product labeling, language use, legal guarantee, and liability, the redress of which inevitably frustrates consumers in cross-border shopping, EU institutions have launched a number of initiatives aimed at harmonizing national legislation. Suppliers within and outside the EU should be aware of existing and upcoming legislation affecting sales, service, and customer support.

Product Safety

The 1992 General Product Safety Directive introduces a general safety requirement at the EU level to ensure that manufacturers only place safe products on the market. It was revised in 2001 to include an obligation on the producer and distributor to notify the Commission in case of a problem with a given product, provisions for its recall, the creation of a European Product Safety Network, and a ban on exports of products to third countries that are not deemed safe in the EU.

Key link: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/safety/prod_legis/index_en.htm

Legal Warranties and After-sales Service

Under the 1999 Directive on the Sale of Consumer Goods and Associated Guarantees, professional sellers are required to provide a minimum two-year warranty on all consumer goods sold to consumers (natural persons acting for purposes outside their trade, businesses or professions), as defined by the Directive. The remedies available to consumers in case of non-compliance are:

- Repair of the good(s);
- Replacement of the good(s);
- A price reduction; or
- Rescission of the sales contract.

Key link:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/consumers/cons_int/safe_shop/guarantees/index_en.htm

Other issues pertaining to consumers' rights and protection, such as the New Approach Directives, CE marking, quality control and data protection are dealt with in Chapter 5 of this report.

Protecting Your Intellectual Property

[Return to top](#)

Please see the [Protection of Property Rights](#) section for more information on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in Estonia.

It is recommended that U.S. firms desiring to register their patent or trademark seek the assistance of a reputable attorney experienced in IPR issues. Additional information can be found at the Association of Estonian Patent Attorneys' (EPS) website:

<http://www.epvs.ee/index.php?pgid=0&pglng=eng>

Due Diligence

[Return to top](#)

AS Krediidiinfo provides credit information:

http://www.krediidiinfo.ee/index.php?ss_max=10&ss=&m=&otsi=1&lang=

The U.S. Embassy can also provide an [International Company Profile \(ICP\)](#) report.

Local Professional Services

[Return to top](#)

Local service providers can be found in the Estonian Yellow Pages:

<http://www.1182.ee/eng/>

<http://www.infopluss.ee>

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

Yellow Pages: <http://www.1182.ee>

Credit Information: <http://www.krediidiinfo.ee/>

Estonian Patent Attorneys: <http://www.epvs.ee/index.php?pgid=0&pqlng=eng>

Estonian Patent Agency: http://www.epa.ee/default.asp?wa_site_id=2

Enterprise Estonia: <http://www.investinestonia.com/>

Media Contacts: <http://www.eall.ee/members.html>,

<http://www.ringhliit.ee/eng/member.html>

Estonian Fairs: <http://www.fair.ee>

Government Procurement Agency: <http://www.rha.gov.ee/>

Yellow pages: <http://www.infopluss.ee>

US Embassy business services: <http://estonia.usembassy.gov/polecon/companies/us-companies.html>

Estonian Customs: www.emta.ee

Enterprise Estonia: www.investinestonia.com, <http://tradewithestonia.com/trade-guide.html>

EU websites:

EU's general data protection Directive (95/46/EC):

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/privacy/index_en.htm

Safe Harbor: <http://www.export.gov/safeharbor/>

Model Contracts:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/privacy/modelcontracts/index_en.htm

Distance Selling Rules: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/cons_int/safe_shop/index_en.htm

Distance Selling of Financial Services:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002L0065:EN:NOT>

E-commerce Directive (2000/31/EC):

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/e-commerce/index_en.htm

VAT on Electronic Service:

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/taxation/vat/how_vat_works/e-services/index_en.htm

Nutrition and health claims made on foods:

[Regulation 1924/2006](#)

Provisions of Nutritional Labeling:

[Nutritional labeling directive 90/496/EC](#)

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Madrid: <http://www.wipo.int/madrid/en>

U.S. websites:

IPR Toolkit: <http://www.buyusa.gov/europeanunion/ipr.html>

EU Public Procurement: http://www.buyusa.gov/europeanunion/eu_tenders.html

Food supplements: <http://useu.usmission.gov/agri/foodsupplements.html>

EU Member State Country Commercial Guides - Market Research Library:
<http://www.export.gov/mrktresearch/index.asp>

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 4: Leading Sectors for U.S. Export and Investment

Agriculture

- [Agriculture](#)

Commercial Sectors

- [Internet Applications, Secure Data Communication](#)
- [General Science and Technology](#)
- [Travel and Tourism](#)
- [Marine Transit Services and Logistics Centers](#)
- [Furniture and Woodworking machinery](#)

Agriculture

Rank of sector: NA
ITA industry code: AGS

Overview

[Return to top](#)

The Estonian food market holds potential for imports of a wide range of high-value packaged goods targeted to higher/middle income level groups, increasing numbers of tourists, and a growing expatriate community. The fast-developing consolidation of retail outlets through investment by large Scandinavian chains may provide new opportunities for exporters who can successfully connect with these companies. Products packaged and targeted at the hotel-restaurant sector such as desserts and beverages are growing in popularity. There are long established consumer preferences for domestic fresh products which have short shelf lives and are free of additives. Although consumer demand remains price-sensitive; consumers have started to show interest in organic foods. A preference for new products is strong among the younger population, but a significant number of consumers remain "tasting level" buyers.

Estonia is a net importer of food products. Estonia's most important food imports are beverages, meat products, fruits and vegetables, coffee, tea, preserves of vegetables and fruits, and feed grains. Major U.S. exports, which have good market potential, include fish (salmon or roe), nuts (shelled almonds or pistachios), baking ingredients such as dried fruit (cranberries, blueberries, or prunes), fruit (grapefruit or table grapes), wines, and distilled spirits.

Estonian food exports include dairy products, meat, fish, and beverages. The U.S. imports Estonian beverages, frozen fish and fish preparations, as well as starch, glues, and cotton articles.

Since Estonia's EU accession in 2004, the EU's external customs tariffs now apply on imports to Estonia. The EU has strict sanitary and phytosanitary regulations for its products. Exporters should first examine whether their product is granted market access to the European Union. Some commodities such as beef, poultry, corn, rice, and processed products derived from them face significant barriers. EU agricultural exports from European countries therefore face zero duties, compared with Most Favored Nation (MFN) rates for U.S. exports. Detailed information on the current customs tariffs applicable in the EU are available at

http://europa.eu.int/comm/taxation_customs/dds/cgi-bin/tarchap?Lang=EN

For more information see: USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (regional office in Warsaw):

<http://poland.usembassy.gov/poland/agric.html>

Internet Applications, Secure Data Communication

Rank of sector: 1

ITA industry code: TES

Overview

[Return to top](#)

Estonia leads the way among new EU countries in Internet usage. According to Eurostat's December 2009 data, 67 percent of the Estonian population between the ages 16-74 uses the Internet, which is higher than the EU27 rate of 60 percent, while 62 percent of households have broadband Internet access at home (EU27 is 56 percent). Internet banking services have experienced rapid growth. Internet banking has become a common channel through which people perform cash transfers, pay taxes, pay for services, etc. 62 percent of the population in Estonia between the ages 16-74 uses Internet banking. 44 percent of individuals between the ages 16-74 and 79 percent of enterprises use the Internet for interaction with public authorities.

Since January 2002, the Citizenship and Migration Board has been issuing a new primary domestic identification document - the ID card. In addition to many security features, the card has a machine-readable code and a chip, an electronic device containing visual data on the card and two security certificates (long number series), to verify the individual and supply digital signatures. In March 2007, Estonia became the first country in the world to employ internet voting for parliamentary elections, using the

new ID-cards to verify voters' identities. E-voters needed an ID card, ID card reader and a PC connected to the Internet. The software for the e-voting worked properly and no technical problems hindered the voting process. Officials monitored closely for cases of fraud, but none were reported. Estonia has since become a case study for many countries wanting to introduce e-voting. In 2009, 15.75 percent of total voters voted online in local government elections nationwide. Possible future uses of the card include the integration of ID cards, banking cards and various access cards.

The Estonian Parliament passed the M-voting (mobile phone) act in December 2008 which will enter into force from January 2011. The new act creates the opportunity to vote by mobile telephones where a SIM card is used to identify the voter and gives access to the internet-based e-voting system. M-voting should be available for the parliamentary elections of spring 2011.

An overview of e-government projects can be found:
<http://www.cyber.ee/cms-en>

In April 2007, Estonia experienced an intensive, coordinated 'cyber attack' against government and private sector websites, following the government's decision to relocate a Soviet-era statue from the center of Tallinn to a nearby military cemetery. The targeted sites recovered quickly, but the attacks revealed weaknesses in cyber defenses and a lack of information security specialists. State institutions plan to spend an estimated \$15 million raising the efficiency of information security over the next six years. The biggest part of this would be spent on protecting critical infrastructure.

In 2004, Estonia proposed establishing the Cooperative Cyber Defense Center (CCD) in Estonia, which was accredited as a NATO center in 2008. U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates announced in November 2008 the United States' intent to become a Sponsoring Nation of the CCD in Estonia.

Best Products/Services

[Return to top](#)

- Identification and secure data communication related applications, software and hardware.
- Data storage.

Resources

[Return to top](#)

Cybernetica: <http://www.cyber.ee/cms-en>

Examples of the ICT related FDI in Estonia: <http://www.investinestonia.com/business-environment/key-sectors?start=1>

General Science and Technology

Rank of sector: 2

ITA industry code: GST, BTC

In December 2008, Estonia and the United States signed an agreement on cooperation in science and technology, the purpose of which is to promote joint activity of researchers from the two countries and thus raise the level of science and technology. Under this agreement, the countries can carry out joint programs and research projects; stage seminars, conferences and symposiums; and exchange information, documents, researchers and specialists. The agreement also sets out the possibility to exchange and share equipment and materials. An annex to the agreement provides for the protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) stemming from joint research activities.

The Estonian Research and Development Strategy "Knowledge-based Estonia" was approved by the Riigikogu (parliament) 1n December 2001. In May 2006, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication revised and updated the strategy for 2007-2013. On the basis of this strategy, annual R&D action plans will be compiled which define specific programs and measures for promoting R&D. The Estonian Government intends to increase expenditures on R&D to 2 percent of GDP by 2012. The main strategies for financing this planned increase include a significant increase in state financing and the active participation of private and foreign capital. In 2007, the trade promotion agency Enterprise Estonia opened a new office in San Jose, CA targeting business opportunities for Estonian companies with IT and biotech firms in Silicon Valley.

Minister of Economy Juhan Parts signed a measure in September 2008 to provide EUR 13.4 million to Estonian businesses over the next five years. This money will help to recruit and hire highly skilled staff to research and development positions, with the aim of raising Estonia's competitiveness. Companies can receive the funds for three years to cover up to 50 percent of the salary of newly hired development staff. (Money cannot be used to compensate existing employees.) The European Union is supporting this project.

According to Eurostat, 44.2 percent of the labor force in the 25-64 age group in Estonia, is classified as HRST, i.e. having either successfully completed an education at the third level in an S&T field of study or is employed in an occupation where such an education is normally required. This is the highest rate among new EU countries (EU27 is 39.8 percent).

As Estonia has committed to having renewable energy supply 25% of its consumption by 2020, therefore interest in the implementation and development of green technologies is increasing. At present the share of renewable is about 18%. Estonia's renewable energy potential lies mainly in biomass, biogas, wind and cogeneration from biofuels.

Enterprise Estonia in co-operation with Nordic technology agencies (Finnnode and TEKES from Finland, Innovation Norway, Innovation Center Denmark, Expotradet from Sweden, and Trade Council of Iceland) will hold the Nordic Green II conference in Silicon Valley on 27th-28th April 2010 (Nordic Green I took place in February 2008). The event will focus on the fields of solar, wind, and hydropower; energy efficient solutions and materials in construction; bio fuels and bio chemicals; fuel elements; and the current reality in using fossil fuels.

Best Products/Services

[Return to top](#)

- information and communication technologies
- biomedicine
- green technologies

Resources

[Return to top](#)

More on Estonian biotechnology: <http://www.investinestonia.com/business-environment/key-sectors?start=6>

Tallinn science park Tehnopol: <http://www.tehnopol.ee/en>

Tartu Science Park: <http://www.teaduspark.ee/en>

Knowledge based Estonia:

<http://www.akadeemia.ee/repository/File/ALUSDOKUD/Knowledge-based%20Estonia%20II.pdf>

Nordic Green II website: <http://www.greentechmedia.com/events/live/nordic-green-ii/>

Travel and Tourism

Rank of sector: 3

ITA industry code: TRA

Overview

[Return to top](#)

The travel and tourism industry in Estonia accounts for an estimated one-fifth of GDP. According to Statistics Estonia, half of all Estonian residents made at least one overnight trip abroad in 2009. Finland is the top destination, but other popular ones include Egypt, Spain, Turkey, Sweden, Greece and Italy. The U.S. is the most popular long haul market for Estonian tourist.

The main obstacles to rapid market growth have been a lack of direct or charter flights and the perception that it is difficult to get a U.S. visa. The latter was solved when Estonia joined the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) November 17, 2008. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the number of Estonian tourists visiting the U.S. increased 48.8% in the first ten months of 2009 compared to the same period in 2008.

There are no direct flights from Estonia to the U.S. There are some package tours offered by local tour operators and Scandinavian travel agencies to California, Florida, Hawaii and for cruises.

New York, California and Florida are the top choices for Estonian travelers to the U.S. New York is the major gateway; Florida is popular for the sun, beaches and Disney World; and California also for the sun, the lifestyle, and as a gateway to the western national parks region.

For both business and vacation travel, fly-and-drive remains the most popular way for Estonians to travel to and in the United States. After flying to a major city, tourists are likely to rent a car and drive to another destination. Two of the most popular routes are New York-Miami and Las Vegas-Los Angeles-San Francisco. The major tourism

attractions for Estonians are locations that are recognized from American TV series broadcast in Estonia.

In June 2008, the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn helped the American Chamber of Commerce in Estonia to establish the first-ever Discover America (DA) committee in the Baltics. This committee brings together car rental, hotel, air and travel agencies to better coordinate the selling of U.S. tourism destinations.

Best Products/Services

[Return to top](#)

Estonian companies are looking for accommodation contacts in major cities on the east coast, mainly in NY. There is a demand for hotels in the price range of USD 150 and lower per night. Florida, California and New York are the top sales prospects for the U.S. travel industry.

Resources

[Return to top](#)

Discover America Committee: <http://www.amcham.ee/?id=3573>

Furniture and Woodworking machinery

Rank of sector: 4
ITA industry code: FUR, FOR

Overview

[Return to top](#)

Estonia's wood processing industries underwent a rapid restructuring process in the early 1990s. The recovery has been sound and presently the share of wood processing in the manufacturing industry is 23.6 percent. The furniture industry accounts for approximately 7 percent of all Estonian exports. Estonia also exports 80-90 percent of the prefabricated wooden houses it produces.

The industry is labor intensive and is spread throughout Estonia. There is considerable concern about Estonian manufacturing's decreasing competitiveness due to poor marketing and increasing costs and a desire within the furniture industry to move up to higher value-added products.

The Embassy is recruiting Estonian companies to attend the International Woodworking Machinery and Furniture Supply Fair [International Buyer Program](#) (IBP) , August 25-28, 2010.

Best Products/Services

[Return to top](#)

Woodworking machinery and furniture supplies.

Resources

[Return to top](#)

Estonian Woodhouse Association: <http://www.woodhouse.ee/association-1>
Estonian Furniture Industry Association: <http://www.furnitureindustry.ee/?lang=en>

Marine Transit Services and Logistic Centres

Rank of sector: 5
ITA industry code: TRN

Overview

[Return to top](#)

Estonia's location is good for the creation of efficient transportation links and distribution chains for goods and services for companies in international transit. Estonia's transport and communications sector is transnational by nature and, therefore is one of the economic sectors most thoroughly integrated with European countries.

The Port of Tallinn is the biggest cargo and passenger port in Estonia. It holds a leading position in the handling of cargo flows between Russia (as well as other CIS countries) and Western Europe. Estonia's sea transportation system is connected to other European ports. There are daily ferry links from Tallinn to Helsinki and Stockholm, as well as frequent ferries to Antwerp, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Kiel, and Harwich, etc.

The Port of Tallinn's Muuga Harbor Free Zone is designed to increase the competitiveness of the transit sector in Estonia by granting more flexible customs procedures to companies rendering transit and distribution services. The Port of Muuga could be attractive to high value container distribution operators. The simplified customs paper handling, easy transfer of ownership rights, and value-added operations allowed in the zone are designed to foster the development of distribution centers. Continuous infrastructure investment provides additional expansion opportunities at Muuga Port, which is one of the deepest ports in the Baltic Sea region.

The port in Sillamae on Estonia's northern coast, opened in 2005, can handle up to 10 million tons of goods a year and receive the biggest ships that enter the Baltic Sea. Sillamae port is a landlord-type port that leases its infrastructure to independent operator companies on the basis of long-term rights.

The North Paldiski Port is a rapidly developing privately-owned port which specializes in handling rolling cargo including cars, containers, general cargo and oversized project cargo.

Best Prospects/Services

[Return to top](#)

Estonian ports overall provide excellent opportunities for investments into value-added logistics services for the Baltic Sea Region, including Russia and Scandinavia.

Resources

[Return to top](#)

Enterprise Estonia: <http://www.investinestonia.com/business-environment?start=2>

Port of Tallinn: www.ts.ee

Port of Sillamae: www.silport.ee

Paldiski Northern Port: <http://www.portofpaldiski.ee/index.php?lang=eng&pid=2>

Paldiski Industrial Park:

<http://www.paldiskitehnopark.ee/content.php?mm=3&pr=5&id=1&lid=eng>

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 5: Trade Regulations, Customs and Standards

- [Import Tariffs](#)
- [Trade Barriers](#)
- [Import Requirements and Documentation](#)
- [U.S. Export Controls](#)
- [Temporary Entry](#)
- [Labeling and Marking Requirements](#)
- [Prohibited and Restricted Imports](#)
- [Customs Regulations and Contact Information](#)
- [Standards](#)
- [Trade Agreements](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

Import Tariffs

[Return to top](#)

Estonian Master Tariff System: <https://vaarikas.emta.ee/emts/do/language?lang=en>

The National Customs Board is a state institution operating under the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Estonia. It enforces the customs regulations of the country and is the direct administrator of customs arrangements. In 1992 Estonia became a member of the World Customs Organization (WCO).

Trade Barriers

[Return to top](#)

For information on existing trade barriers, please see the National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers, published by United States Trade Representative and available through the following website:

<http://www.ustr.gov/about-us/press-office/reports-and-publications/2009/2009-national-trade-estimate-report-foreign-trad>

Information on agricultural trade barriers can be found at the following website:

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/posthome/useu/>

To report existing or new trade barriers and get assistance in removing them, contact either the Trade Compliance Center at <http://www.trade.gov/tcc> or the U.S. Mission to the European Union at <http://www.buyusa.gov/europeanunion>.

Import Requirements and Documentation

[Return to top](#)

Information on Estonian Customs requirements: <http://www.emta.ee/?id=1939>

Information on the import requirements and documentation can be found:
<http://www.tradewithestonia.com/trade-guide.html?start=2>

U.S. Export Controls

[Return to top](#)

As a member state of the European Union and NATO, Estonia is obliged to share the responsibility for international security, which presupposes the adoption of the values and the codes of conduct of these organizations. An essential part of this is the efficient implementation of export control measures and a foreign policy oriented towards preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The latter is coordinated by several international organizations – the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Australia Group (dealing with issues related to chemical weapons), the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

U.S. Export controls and licenses:
http://www.export.gov/regulation/eg_main_018219.asp

Temporary Entry

[Return to top](#)

Goods transiting Estonian territory are not charged duties. It is possible to obtain a temporary exemption from duty for items such as commercial samples, and for goods intended for public displays at exhibitions and fairs. If the goods are put to any unauthorized use or are not re-exported within the prescribed time period (a maximum of one year) they must go through normal customs clearance and become liable for relevant duties and taxes.

Labeling and Marking Requirements

[Return to top](#)

The following information, **in Estonian**, is required on retail packaging, or otherwise marked on the product (a sticker, label, etc.):

- Name of product (indicating clearly the contents of the package)
- Name of the manufacturer or the name of the company that had the product manufactured
- Amount of contents (weight or volume of the contents to be specified, measures in the metric system).

If warranted, the following information should also be included on the retail packaging or otherwise clearly identified on the product: contents of the product, care instructions, operating instructions, and a warning of possible danger related to the use or disposal of the product.

A retail-size food package must show the name of the manufacturer, packer or importer, commercial name of the product, net metric weight or volume, ingredients in descending order of weight, last recommended date of sale, and storage instructions if perishable or intended for infants. This information described above must be provided **in Estonian**.

An overview of EU mandatory and voluntary labeling and marking requirements has been compiled in a market research report that is available at:

http://www.buyusainfo.net/docs/x_4171929.pdf.

The subject has been also been covered in the section about [standards](#).

Prohibited and Restricted Imports

[Return to top](#)

The Integrated Tariff of the European Communities (TARIC) is designed to show various rules applying to specific products being imported into the customs territory of the EU or, in some cases, when exported from it. To determine if a product is prohibited or subject to restriction, check the TARIC for that product for the following codes:

CITES	Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species
PROHI	Import Suspension
RSTR	Import Restriction

For information on TARIC, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/databases/taric/index_en.htm

Customs Regulations and Contact Information

[Return to top](#)

Information on the Estonian Customs regulations can be found:

<http://www.tradewithestonia.com/trade-guide.html?start=2>

Estonian Customs: <http://www.emta.ee/?id=1939>

Standards

[Return to top](#)

- [Overview](#)
- [Standards Organizations](#)
- [Conformity Assessment](#)
- [Product Certification](#)
- [Accreditation](#)
- [Publication of Technical Regulations](#)
- [Labeling and Marking](#)
- [Contacts](#)

Overview

[Return to top](#)

While harmonization of EU legislation can facilitate access to the EU Single Market, manufacturers should be aware that regulations and technical standards might also function as barriers to trade if U.S. standards are different from those of the European Union. Products tested and certified in the United States to American standards are likely to have to be retested and re-certified to EU requirements as a result of the EU's different approach to the protection of the health and safety of consumers and the environment. Where products are not regulated by specific EU technical legislation, they are always subject to the EU's General Product Safety Directive as well as to possible additional national requirements.

European Union standards created under the [New Approach](#) are harmonized across the 27 EU Member States and European Economic Area countries to allow for the free flow of goods. A feature of the New Approach is CE marking. More information is available at: <http://www.tradewithestonia.com/trade-guide.html?start=6>

Agricultural Standards

The establishment of harmonized EU rules and standards in the food sector has been ongoing for several decades, but it took until January 2002 for the publication of a general food law establishing the general principles of EU food law. This Regulation introduced mandatory traceability throughout the feed and food chain as of Jan 1, 2005. For specific information on agricultural standards, please refer to the Foreign Agricultural Service's website at: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/posthome/useu/>

There are also export guides to import regulations and standards available on the Foreign Agricultural Service's website: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/posthome/useu/>

Standards Organizations

[Return to top](#)

EVS (a non-profit association recognized by the Government of Estonia as the national standards body for Estonia) started its operations as provided by the Technical Regulations and Standards Act on April 1, 2000. National Standards are sold in Estonia only by EVS. EVS has exclusive rights for sale of ISO, CEN, BSI, DIN, SFS and GOST standards in Estonia. EVS also has a sales agreement with IHS Nordic <http://www.evs.ee/Esileht/tabid/111/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

EU standards setting is a process based on consensus initiated by industry or mandated by the European Commission and carried out by independent standards bodies, acting at the national, European or international level. There is strong encouragement for non-governmental organizations, such as environmental and consumer groups, to actively participate in European standardization.

Many standards in the EU are adopted from international standards bodies such as the International Standards Organization (ISO). The drafting of specific EU standards is handled by three European standards organizations:

- CENELEC, European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (<http://www.cenelec.org/Cenelec/Homepage.htm>)
- ETSI, European Telecommunications Standards Institute (<http://www.etsi.org/>)
- CEN, European Committee for Standardization, handling all other standards (<http://www.cen.eu/cenorm/homepage.htm>)

NIST Notify U.S. Service

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries. Notify U.S. is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to

review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your access to international markets. Register online at Internet URL:

<http://www.nist.gov/notifyus/>

Conformity Assessment

[Return to top](#)

Conformity Assessment is a mandatory step for the manufacturer in the process of complying with specific EU legislation. The purpose of conformity assessment is to ensure consistency of compliance during all stages of the production process to facilitate acceptance of the final product. EU product legislation gives manufacturers some choice with regard to conformity assessment, depending on the level of risk involved in the use of their product. These range from self-certification, type examination and production quality control systems, to full quality assurance systems. You can find conformity assessment bodies in Estonia in this list by the European Commission.

Key Link: <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newapproach/nando/>

Product Certification

[Return to top](#)

To sell products on the EU market of 27 Member States as well as Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland, U.S. exporters are required to apply CE marking whenever their product is covered by specific product legislation. CE marking product legislation offers manufacturers a number of choices and requires decisions to determine which safety/health concerns need to be addressed, which conformity assessment module is best suited to the manufacturing process, and whether or not to use EU-wide harmonized standards. There is no easy way for U.S. exporters to understand and go through the process of CE marking, but hopefully this section provides some background and clarification.

Products manufactured to standards adopted by CEN, CENELEC and ETSI, and published in the Official Journal as harmonized standards, are presumed to conform to the requirements of EU Directives. The manufacturer then applies the CE marking and issues a declaration of conformity. With these, the product will be allowed to circulate freely within the EU. A manufacturer can choose not to use the harmonized EU standards, but then must demonstrate that the product meets the essential safety and performance requirements. Trade barriers occur when design, rather than performance, standards are developed by the relevant European standardization organization, and when U.S. companies do not have access to the standardization process through a European presence.

The CE marking addresses itself primarily to the national control authorities of the Member States, and its use simplifies the task of essential market surveillance of regulated products. Although CE marking is intended primarily for inspection purposes by Member State inspectors, the consumer may well perceive it as a quality mark.

The CE marking is not intended to include detailed technical information on the product, but there must be enough information to enable the inspector to trace the product back to the manufacturer or the authorized representative established in the EU. This detailed information should not appear next to the CE marking, but rather on the declaration of conformity (which the manufacturer or authorized agent must be able to provide at any

time, together with the product's technical file), or the documents accompanying the product.

Accreditation

[Return to top](#)

Independent certification bodies, known as notified bodies, have been officially accredited by competent authorities to test and certify to EU requirements. However, under U.S.-EU Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs), notified bodies based in the United States and referred to as conformity assessment bodies, are allowed to test in the United States to EU specifications, and vice versa. The costs are significantly lower which results in U.S. products becoming more competitive. At this time, the U.S.-EU MRAs cover the following sectors: EMC (in force), RTTE (in force), medical devices (in transition), pharmaceutical (on hold), recreational craft (in force) and marine equipment (in force). The U.S. Department of Commerce, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), has a link on its website to American and European Conformity Assessment bodies operating under a mutual recognition agreement.

Key Link: <http://ts.nist.gov/Standards/Global/mra.cfm>

Accreditation is handled at Member State level. "European Accreditation" <http://www.european-accreditation.org/content/home/home.htm> is an organization representing nationally recognized accreditation bodies. Membership is open to nationally recognized accreditation bodies in countries in the European geographical area that can demonstrate that they operate an accreditation system compatible with EN45003 or ISO/IEC Guide 58.

Estonian Accreditation Center: http://www.eak.ee/index_eng.php?pageld=15

Publication of Technical Regulations

[Return to top](#)

The Official Journal is the official gazette of the European Union. It is published daily on the internet and consists of two series covering draft and adopted legislation as well as case law, studies by committees, and more (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOIndex.do>). It lists the standards reference numbers linked to legislation (http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/european-standards/documents/harmonised-standards-legislation/list-references/index_en.htm). National technical regulations are published on the Commission's website http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/tris/index_en.htm to allow other countries and interested parties to comment.

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other member countries. **Notify U.S.** is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect access to international markets. Register online at Internet URL: <http://tsapps.nist.gov/notifyus/data/index/index.cfm>

Labeling and Marking

[Return to top](#)

Manufacturers should be mindful that, in addition to the EU's mandatory and voluntary schemes, national voluntary labeling schemes might still apply. These schemes may be highly appreciated by consumers, and thus, become unavoidable for marketing purposes.

Manufacturers are advised to take note that all labels require metric units although dual labeling is also acceptable. The use of language on labels has been the subject of a Commission Communication, which encourages multilingual information, while preserving the right of Member States to require the use of language of the country of consumption. More on Estonian regulations on labeling can be found in the [Labeling and Marking Requirements section](#).

The EU has mandated that certain products be sold in standardized quantities. Council Directive 2007/45/EC, harmonizes packaging of wine and spirits throughout the EU. Existing national sizes will be abolished with a few exceptions for domestic producers.

Key Link: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/prepack/packsize/packsiz_en.htm

Contacts

[Return to top](#)

Estonian Accreditation Center: http://www.eak.ee/index_eng.php?pageld=15
Estonian Centre for Standardization: <http://www.evs.ee/Esileht/tabid/111/language/en-US/Default.aspx>
[U.S. Embassy](#)

Trade Agreements

[Return to top](#)

For a list of trade agreements with the EU and its Member States, as well as concise explanations, please see http://tcc.export.gov/Trade_Agreements/index.asp.

Web resources

[Return to top](#)

Estonian Accreditation Center: http://www.eak.ee/index_eng.php?pageld=15
Estonian Centre for Standardization: <http://www.evs.ee/Esileht/tabid/111/language/en-US/Default.aspx>
Estonian Customs: www.emta.ee

EU websites:

Online customs tariff database (TARIC):

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/databases/taric/index_en.htm

Cenelec, European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization:

<http://www.cenelec.eu/Cenelec/Homepage.htm>

ETSI, European Telecommunications Standards Institute: <http://www.etsi.org/>

CEN, European Committee for Standardization, handling all other standards:

<http://www.cen.eu/cenorm/homepage.htm>

National technical Regulations: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/tris/index_en.htm

U.S. websites:

National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers:

<http://www.ustr.gov/about-us/press-office/reports-and-publications/2009/2009-national-trade-estimate-report-foreign-trade>

Agricultural Trade Barriers: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/posthome/useu/>

Trade Compliance Center: <http://www.trade.gov/tcc>

U.S. Mission to the European Union: <http://www.buyusa.gov/europeanunion>

The New EU Battery Directive: http://www.buyusainfo.net/docs/x_8086174.pdf

The Latest on REACH: <http://www.buyusa.gov/europeanunion/reach.html>.

WEEE and RoHS in the EU: <http://www.buyusa.gov/europeanunion/weee.html>

Overview of EU Certificates: <http://useu.usmission.gov/agri/certificates-overview.html>

Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/>

EU Marking, Labeling and Packaging – An Overview

http://www.buyusainfo.net/docs/x_4171929.pdf.

The European Union Eco-Label: http://buyusainfo.net/docs/x_4284752.pdf

Trade Agreements: http://tcc.export.gov/Trade_Agreements/index.asp

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 6: Investment Climate

- [Openness to Foreign Investment](#)
- [Conversion and Transfer Policies](#)
- [Expropriation and Compensation](#)
- [Dispute Settlement](#)
- [Performance Requirements and Incentives](#)
- [Right to Private Ownership and Establishment](#)
- [Protection of Property Rights](#)
- [Transparency of Regulatory System](#)
- [Efficient Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment](#)
- [Competition from State Owned Enterprises](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [Political Violence](#)
- [Corruption](#)
- [Bilateral Investment Agreements](#)
- [OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs](#)
- [Labor](#)
- [Foreign-Trade Zones/Free Ports](#)
- [Foreign Direct Investment Statistics](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

Openness to Foreign Investment

[Return to top](#)

As a member of the EU, the Government of Estonian (GOE) maintains liberal policies in order to attract investments that could produce exports. Foreign investors are treated on an equal footing with local investors. While the GOE's focus in the mid-1990s was to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) into Estonia, finding new export markets for Estonian goods and services is the GOE's current priority. Creating favorable conditions for FDI and openness to foreign trade has been the foundation of Estonia's economic strategy.

Estonia's government does not screen foreign investments, nor has it set limitations on foreign ownership. It does, however, establish requirements for certain sectors. These requirements are not intended to restrict foreign ownership but rather to regulate it and establish clear ownership responsibilities. Licenses are required for a foreign investor to become involved in the following sectors: mining, energy, gas and water supply, railroad and transport, waterways, ports, dams and other water-related structures and telecommunications and communication networks. The Estonian Financial Supervision Authority issues licenses for foreign interests seeking to invest in or establish a bank. Additionally, the Estonian Competition Authority reviews transactions for anti-competition concerns. Government review and licensing have proven to be routine and non-discriminatory.

Estonia's privatization program is now complete. Only a small number of enterprises -- the country's main port, the power plants, the postal system, and the national lottery --

remain wholly state-owned. The GOE is a minority shareholder in Estonian Air with 34 percent of shares (SAS Group is the largest shareholder, with 49 percent). In January 2007, the government also repurchased the 66 percent of shares of the Estonian Railway which had been in the hands of private investors since 2001, claiming the need to maintain control of this key part of Estonia's national infrastructure.

During the last decade, Estonia has been one of the leading countries in Central and Eastern Europe in terms of inward investment per capita. Some general facts concerning foreign direct investment inflows into Estonia include:

- There is a trend towards cross-border acquisitions;
- Greenfield investments are increasingly rare;
- FDI is expected to jump if Estonia meets all the Maastricht criteria by spring 2010 and adopts the euro as planned in January 2011.

Estonia by international indexes/rankings:

	Year	Index/Ranking
TI Corruption Index	2009	27
Heritage Economic Freedom	2009	13
World Bank Doing Business	2010	24
MCC Govnt Effectiveness	2008	1.1488
MCC Rule of Law	2008	1.0544
MCC Control of Corruption	2008	0.94
MCC Fiscal Policy	2008	1.28E-02
MCC Trade Policy	2009	87.48
MCC Regulatory Quality	2008	1.47
MCC Business Start Up	2009	0.99
MCC Natural Resource Mgmt	2009	98.4

More on rankings:

TI Corruption Index:

http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009/cpi_2009_table

Heritage Economic Freedom: <http://www.heritage.org/index/Ranking.aspx>

World Bank Doing Business: <http://www.doingbusiness.org/economyrankings/>

MCC:

http://www.mcc.gov/search/results.php?q=FY10+codebook&Submit=Go&client=default_frontend&output=xml_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=default_frontend&site=mcc&num=10&filter=0

Conversion and Transfer Policies

[Return to top](#)

Estonia has been under a currency board arrangement since 1992. Initially pegged to the German mark, the Estonian kroon (EEK) has been fixed to the euro at EEK 15.65 since January 1999. Estonia joined the Exchange Rate Mechanism II (ERM II) in June, 2004. Estonia is on track to join the Eurozone in early 2011.

The Estonian currency has no restrictions on its transfer or conversion. Similarly, there are no restrictions, limitations or delays involved in converting or transferring funds associated with an investment (including remittances of investment capital, earnings, loan repayments, or lease payments) into other currencies at market rates. There is no limit on dividend distributions as long as they correspond to a company's official earnings records. If a foreign company ceases to operate in Estonia, all its assets may be repatriated without restriction. These policies are all long-standing; there is no indication that they will be altered in the future. Foreign exchange is readily available for any purpose.

Expropriation and Compensation

[Return to top](#)

Private property rights are observed in Estonia. The government has the right to expropriate in the case of public interests related to policing the borders, public ports and airports, public streets and roads, supply to public water catchments, etc. Compensation is offered based on market value. Post is not aware of any expropriation cases involving discrimination against foreign owners.

Dispute Settlement

[Return to top](#)

Investment disputes concerning U.S. or other foreign investors and Estonia are rare. Estonia's judiciary is independent and insulated from government influence. Property rights and contracts are enforced by the courts.

Estonia's commercial law has proven extremely effective and is often cited as one of the components of Estonia's successful economic reforms. The Commercial Code, as a part of the overall commercial law, is consistently applied. The Obligation Law, enacted in 2002, is the basis for all commercial agreements. A Bankruptcy Act was adopted in 2004. The full text of these laws can be found at: <http://www.legaltext.ee/en/>. Estonia has been a member of the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) since 1992 and a member of the New York Convention of 1958 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards since 1993.

Recognition of court rulings of EU Member States is regulated by EU legislation.

The Arbitration Court of the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is a permanent arbitration court which settles disputes arising from contractual and other civil law relationships, including foreign trade and other international economic relations.

Performance Requirements and Incentives

[Return to top](#)

A fundamental principle of Estonia's economic policy is equal treatment of foreign and domestic capital. No special investment incentives are available to foreign investors, nor is any favored treatment accorded them. Similarly, there are no specific performance requirements for foreign investments that differ from those required of domestic investments.

Estonia continues to refine its immigration policies and practices. U.S. citizens are exempt from the quota regulating the number of immigration and residence permits issued, as are citizens of the EU and Switzerland.

Estonia has a long-standing system of low, simple, flat-rate taxes, in particular, a 21 percent income tax. To encourage companies to expand their business, all reinvested profits are exempted from corporate income tax. However, any redistributed profits, such as dividends, are taxed at 21 percent. This tax strategy was designed to promote business and accelerate economic growth by making additional funds available for investment.

Generally, the government does not impose “offset” requirements on major procurements. There are no government imposed conditions to invest.

Right to Private Ownership and Establishment

[Return to top](#)

Private ownership and entrepreneurship are respected in Estonia. In most fields of business, participation by foreign companies or individuals is unrestricted. As provided for by the Law on Foreign Investments, foreign investors have the same rights and obligations as Estonian citizens. Foreign investors may purchase buildings and land for production purposes and establish, buy, and fully own companies.

Government approval is required for foreign investment and participation in only a handful of sectors (see section A.1).

Competitive equality is the official standard applied to private enterprises in competition with public enterprises. Private companies do not face discrimination in relation to state-owned companies.

Protection of Property Rights

[Return to top](#)

Secured interests in property are recognized and enforced. Mortgages are quite common for both residential and commercial property and leasing as a means of financing is widespread and efficient.

The legal system protects and facilitates acquisition and disposition of all property rights, including land, buildings, and mortgages. The long and complicated process of property restitution (began when the Principles of Ownership Reform Act came into force June 20, 1991) is almost complete, including the area of non-residential real properties.

The Estonian legal system adequately protects property rights, including intellectual property, patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets and industrial design. Estonia adheres to the Berne Convention, WIPO and TRIPS, the Rome Convention and the Geneva Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Producers. Estonian legislation fully complies with EU directives granting protection to authors, performing artists, record producers, and broadcasting organizations.

Protecting Your Intellectual Property in Estonia

Several general principles are important for effective management of intellectual property (“IP”) rights in Estonia. First, it is important to have an overall strategy to protect

your IP. Second, IP is protected differently in Estonia than in the U.S. Third, rights, except for copyright, must be registered and enforced in Estonia under local laws. In Estonia, equal protection of copyright is provided via international conventions and treaties to foreign and Estonian authors. Your U.S. trademark and patent registrations will not protect you in Estonia. Protection against unauthorized use depends on Estonian normative regulations that adhere to international laws and directives of the European Union.

Registration of patents and trademarks is on a first-in-time, first-in-right basis, so you should consider applying for trademark and patent protection even before selling your products or services in the Estonian market. It is vital that companies understand that intellectual property is primarily a private right and that the U.S. government generally cannot enforce rights for private individuals in Estonia. It is the responsibility of the rights' holders to register, protect, and enforce their rights where relevant, retaining their own counsel and advisors. Companies may wish to seek advice from local attorneys or IP consultants who are experts in Estonian law. This list is available on the embassy website: http://estonia.usembassy.gov/local_attorneys.html.

While the U.S. Government stands ready to assist, there is little we can do if the rights' holders have not taken these fundamental steps necessary to secure and enforce their IP in a timely fashion. Moreover, in many countries, rights holders who delay enforcing their rights under the misconception that the USG can provide a political resolution to a legal problem may find that their rights have been eroded or abrogated due to legal doctrines such as statutes of limitations, laches, estoppel, or unreasonable delay in prosecuting a law suit. In no instance should U.S. Government advice be seen as a substitute for the obligation of a rights' holder to promptly pursue its case.

It is always advisable to conduct due diligence on potential partners. Negotiate from the position of your partner and give your partner clear incentives to honor the contract. A good partner is an important ally in protecting IP rights. Consider carefully, however, whether to permit your partner to register your IP rights on your behalf. Doing so may create a risk that your partner will list itself as the IP owner and fail to transfer the rights should the partnership end. Keep an eye on your cost structure and reduce the margins (and the incentive) of would-be bad actors. Projects and sales in Estonia require constant attention. Work with legal counsel familiar with Estonian laws to create a solid contract that includes non-compete clauses and confidentiality/non-disclosure provisions.

It is also recommended that small and medium-size companies understand the importance of working together with trade associations and organizations to support efforts to protect IP and stop counterfeiting.

IP Resources

A wealth of information on protecting IP is freely available to U.S. rights holders. Some excellent resources for companies regarding intellectual property include the following:

--For information about patent, trademark, or copyright issues -including enforcement issues in the U.S. and other countries - call the STOP! Hotline: 1-866-999-HALT or register at www.StopFakes.gov.

--For more information about registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), contact the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) at: 1-800-786-9199.
--For more information about registering for copyright protection in the U.S., contact the U.S. Copyright Office at: 1-202-707-5959.
--Estonian Patent Office: <http://www.epa.ee/>
--Estonian Organization for Copyright Protection: <http://www.eako.ee>
--Estonian Association of the Phonogram Producers: <http://www.efy.ee>

Transparency of Regulatory System

[Return to top](#)

The Government of Estonia has set transparent policies and effective laws to foster competition and establish "clear rules of the game." However, due to the small size of Estonia's commercial community, instances of favoritism are not uncommon despite regulations and procedures designed to limit them.

Tax, labor, health and safety laws and policies have been crafted to encourage investment. They appear to have been successful, given the relatively high level of foreign direct investment per capita.

All proposed laws and regulations are published for public comment on the website: <http://eoigus.just.ee/>.

Also, the public can comment on draft laws and propose changes to the government regulations at: www.osale.ee.

Estonia's bureaucratic procedures are generally far more streamlined and transparent than those of other countries in the region and are among the most streamlined and transparent in the EU.

International institutions and organizations give Estonia's economic policies high marks. The U.S.-based Wall Street Journal/Heritage Foundation's 2009 Index of Economic Freedom ranked Estonia 13th in the world. The index is a composite of scores in monetary policy, banking and finance, black markets, wages and prices. Estonia scores highly on this scale for investment freedom, fiscal freedom, financial freedom, property rights, business freedom, and monetary freedom.

Efficient Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment

[Return to top](#)

Estonia's financial sector is modern and efficient. Government and Central Bank policies facilitate the free flow of financial resources, thereby supporting the flow of resources in the product and factor markets. Credit is allocated on market terms and foreign investors are able to obtain credit on the local market. The private sector has access to an expanding range of credit instruments similar in variety to those offered by banks in Estonia's Nordic neighbors Finland and Sweden.

Legal, regulatory, and accounting systems are transparent and consistent with international norms.

The Security Market Law complies with EU requirements and enables EU securities brokerage firms to deal in the market without establishing a local subsidiary. The

NASDAQ OMX stock exchanges in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius form the Baltic Market, which facilitates cross-border trading and attracting more investments to the region. This includes sharing the same trading system and harmonizing rules and market practices, all with the aim of reducing the costs of cross-border trading in the Baltic region.

Estonia's banking system has consolidated rapidly. Total assets of the commercial banks were approximately USD 30 billion at the end of 2009. Two Swedish-owned banks (Swedbank and SEB) control over 70 percent of the market. More information is available at: <http://www.pangaliit.ee/eng/Info/>.

The Scandinavian-owned Estonian banking system is modern and efficient, encompassing the strongest and best-regulated banks in the region. These provide both domestic and international services (including internet and telephone banking) at very competitive rates. Both local and international firms provide a full range of financial, insurance, accounting, and legal services. Estonia has a highly advanced internet banking system: more than 87 percent of internet users make their everyday transactions via internet banking. In Estonia over 71 percent of the population between the ages of 16-74 uses the internet.

The Central Bank and the government hold no shares in the banking sector.

In 2001, the Estonian government created a consolidated Financial Supervisory Authority (FSA) under the auspices of the Central Bank. The FSA conducts financial supervision independently on behalf of the state and has a separate budget. The FSA was established to enhance the stability, reliability, transparency, and efficiency of the financial sector, to reduce system risks, and to prevent the use of the financial sector for criminal purposes.

Takeovers in Estonia are regulated by the EU Takeover Directive 2004/25/EC. More information is available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32004L0025:EN:HTML>.

Competition from State Owned Enterprises

[Return to top](#)

Only a small number of enterprises -- the country's main port, the power plants, the postal system, railway and the national lottery -- are state-owned (SOEs). Public enterprises operate on the same legal bases as private enterprises without any advantages.

Each of the SOEs' management reports to an independent supervisory board consisting of government officials, politically-affiliated individuals and also prominent members of the business community.

There are several sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) in Estonia. They have similar corporate governance to SOEs.

Both SOEs and SWFs are required to publish their annual reports (usually available on the internet also in English) and submit their books for independent audit.

Corporate Social Responsibility

[Return to top](#)

The majority of OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are incorporated into Estonian legislation. 2005 saw the start of a non-profit organization, Responsible Business Forum in Estonia, with an aim of furthering CSR in Estonian society. Responsible Business Forum in Estonia is a partner in the CSR360 Global Partner Network. CSR360 (www.csr360gpn.org) is a network of independent organizations, who work as the interface of business and society to mobilize business for good.

In 2008, the Tallinn City Council began its Responsible Business Award competition to recognize entrepreneurs' social and environmental innovation and entrepreneurship.

Political Violence

[Return to top](#)

Civil unrest generally is not a problem in Estonia and there have been no incidents of terrorism. Large public gatherings and demonstrations may occur on occasion in response to political issues, but these have proceeded, with few exceptions, without incident in the past.

Corruption

[Return to top](#)

Estonia has laws, regulations, and penalties to combat corruption and, while corruption is not unknown, it has generally not been a major problem faced by foreign investors. However, foreign companies have found it difficult to become part of the local commercial community because many Estonian executives have known one another since childhood and often help one another out in ways that make it difficult for outsiders to compete effectively.

Both offering and taking bribes are criminal offenses which can bring imprisonment of up to five years. While "payments" that exceed the services rendered are not unknown, and "conflict of interest" is not a well-understood issue, surveys of American and other non-Estonian businesses have shown the issues of corruption and/or protection rackets are not a major concern for these companies. In 2009 Transparency International (TI) ranked Estonia 27th out of 180 countries on its Corruption Perceptions Index. The Estonian Ministry of Justice invited TI to take a lead role in the drafting of the country's new anti-corruption strategy

In 2004, the GOE instituted the "Honest State" program, an anti-corruption platform which included specific policies to reduce the risk of corruption in government. These included auditing local governments (widely seen as the greatest source of corruption in Estonia), requiring public servants to file electronic declarations of their economic interests, setting up a National Ethics Council, increasing the number of specialized investigators and prosecutors who focus on corruption, and setting up an anonymous hotline for people to report corruption cases. The principles of the "Honest State" program continue to be an embedded part of GOE best practices.

The Security Police Board has shown its capacity to deal with corruption offences and criminal misconduct, leading to the conviction of several high-ranking state officials. Estonia co-operates in fighting corruption at the international level and is a member of GRECO (Group of States Against Corruption). Many European countries are parties to

either the Council of Europe (CoE) Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, the Civil Law Convention, or both. The Criminal Law Convention requires criminalization of a wide range of national and transnational conduct, including bribery, money-laundering, and account offenses. It also incorporates provisions on liability of legal persons and witness protection. The Civil Law Convention includes provisions on compensation for damage relating to corrupt acts, whistleblower protection, and validity of contracts, inter alia. GRECO was established in 1999 by the CoE to monitor compliance with these and related anti-corruption standards. Currently, GRECO comprises 46 member states (45 European countries and the United States). As of December 2009, the Criminal Law Convention had 42 parties and the Civil Law Convention had 34 (see www.coe.int/greco.)

Estonia began as a full participant in the OECD Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions (the Working Group) in June 2004, and deposited its instruments of accession on November 23, 2004. The Convention entered into force in Estonia on January 22, 2005. The Convention obligates the Parties to criminalize bribery of foreign public officials in the conduct of international business. The United States meets its international obligations under the OECD Anti-bribery Convention through the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

It is important for U.S. companies, irrespective of their size, to assess the business climate in the relevant market in which they will be operating or investing, and to have an effective compliance program or measures to prevent and detect corruption, including foreign bribery. U.S. individuals and firms operating or investing in foreign markets should take the time to become familiar with the relevant anticorruption laws of both the foreign country and the United States in order to properly comply with them, and where appropriate, they should seek the advice of legal counsel.

U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act: In 1977, the United States enacted the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), which makes it unlawful for a U.S. person, and certain foreign issuers of securities, to make a corrupt payment to foreign public officials for the purpose of obtaining or retaining business for or with, or directing business to, any person. The FCPA also applies to foreign firms and persons who take any act in furtherance of such a corrupt payment while in the United States. For more detailed information on the FCPA, see the FCPA Lay-Person's Guide at: <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/docs/dojdocb.html>.

UN Convention: The UN Anticorruption Convention entered into force on December 14, 2005, and there are 143 parties to it as of December 2009 (see <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/signatories.html>). The UN Convention requires countries to establish criminal and other offences to cover a wide range of acts of corruption. The UN Convention goes beyond previous anticorruption instruments, covering a broad range of issues ranging from basic forms of corruption such as bribery and solicitation, embezzlement and trading in influence, to the concealment and laundering of the proceeds of corruption.

Estonia's signing of the UN Anticorruption Convention is currently on the Estonian Parliament agenda and has passed the first reading.

Local Laws: U.S. firms should familiarize themselves with local anticorruption laws, and, where appropriate, seek legal counsel. While the U.S. Department of State cannot

provide legal advice on local laws, the embassies can provide assistance with navigating the host country's legal system and obtaining a list of local legal counsel. The embassy can also provide services that may assist U.S. companies in conducting their due diligence as part of the company's overarching compliance program when choosing business partners or agents overseas. For more information, go to: <http://estonia.usembassy.gov/polecon/companies/us-companies.html>.

The Departments of Commerce and State provide worldwide support for qualified U.S. companies bidding on foreign government contracts through the Commerce Department's Advocacy Center and State's Office of Commercial and Business Affairs. Problems, including alleged corruption by foreign governments or competitors, encountered by U.S. companies in seeking such foreign business opportunities can be brought to the attention of appropriate U.S. government officials, including local embassy personnel and through the Department of Commerce Trade Compliance Center "Report A Trade Barrier" website at: tcc.export.gov/Report_a_Barrier/index.asp.

Anti-Corruption Resources

Some useful resources for individuals and companies regarding combating corruption in global markets include the following:

--Information about the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), including a "Lay-Person's Guide to the FCPA" is available at the U.S. Department of Justice's website at: <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa>.

--General information about anticorruption initiatives, such as the OECD Convention and the FCPA, including translations of the statute into several languages, is available at the Department of Commerce Office of the Chief Counsel for International Commerce website: http://www.ogc.doc.gov/trans_anti_bribery.html.

Bilateral Investment Agreements

[Return to top](#)

Estonia has investment promotion and protection agreements with the Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, UK and the United States. A Bilateral Taxation Treaty with the U.S. came into force on January 1, 2000.

OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs

[Return to top](#)

Estonia is a member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency.

Estonia joined the Exchange Rate Mechanism II on June 28, 2004. The Estonian kroon is fixed against the euro at 1 EUR = 15.65 EEK. The Estonian banking and financial sector are judged generally stable, though they have endured stresses during the global credit crisis which began in 2008.

Estonia is working diligently to meet all the Maastricht criteria by spring 2010 in order to be invited to join the euro-zone on January 1, 2011. There are no indications that the proposed exchange rate of the Estonian kroon to euro would differ from the current fixed rate.

Labor

[Return to top](#)

Estonia has a very small population - only 1.34 million people. The average monthly Estonian salary at the end of 2009 was about USD 1,100. The world economic crisis and contracting domestic economy have also brought a decrease in salaries (about -4.5 percent in 2009) and an increase in unemployment (2009 estimate around 15 percent).

The influence of trade unions, which tend to take a cooperative approach to industrial relations, is increasing. Estonia adheres to ILO Conventions protecting workers' rights.

With an aging population and a negative birth rate, Estonia, like many other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, faces serious demographic challenges affecting its long term supply of labor. Improving labor efficiency is a key focus for Estonia in the short-to-mid term.

Foreign-Trade Zones/Free Ports

[Return to top](#)

According to the Customs Act, free zones can be established on the customs territory by order of the government. Goods in a free zone are considered as being outside the customs territory, for the purposes of import and export duties. As a rule, customs procedures are not applied to goods in a free zone. In free zones, VAT and excise duties (as well as possible fees for customs services) do not have to be paid on goods brought in for later re-export.

In Estonia, there are free zones at the Muuga port (near Tallinn), the Sillamae port (northeast Estonia), and in Valga (southern Estonia). All free zones are open for FDI.

The main supervisory authority responsible for monitoring the movement of goods in or out of free zones is the Estonian Tax and Customs Board (governed by the Ministry of Finance). There are ID requirements for companies and individuals using the zone. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Coast Guard) has inspected Estonia's ports and determined that the Republic of Estonia has substantially implemented the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code at all facilities visited.

Foreign Direct Investment Statistics

[Return to top](#)

According to the Bank of Estonia (see the link below), by the end of Q3 2009, the cumulative stock of FDI amounted to USD 15.6 billion. Roughly 30 percent of FDI has been invested into financial intermediation and the same amount in real estate, renting and business activities. Manufacturing is in third place with 15.5 percent of total FDI. Wholesale and retail trade has attracted 11.4 percent of the foreign direct investment stock.

Scandinavian countries are the largest foreign direct investors in Estonia. Sweden has 37 percent of the total, followed by Finland with 25 percent, and the Netherlands with 9 percent. The United States accounts for 1.7 percent of foreign direct investment stock (10th overall). The inward FDI stock in Estonia is about 78 percent of GDP.

In Q3 2009, Estonian DI abroad was about 73 billion EEK, which is about 7 billion USD.

For the value of inward and outward FDI (position, stock, and flows in recent years by the commodity group, as well as country of origin) please go to:

<http://www.eestipank.info/pub/en/dokumendid/statistika/maksebilanss/statistika/statistika.html?objId=292616>.

The ten largest FDI companies in Estonia in terms of total investment and influence on the Estonian economy are:

SEB Pank AS

Foreign Shareholder: SEB AB

Country of origin: Sweden

Sector of operation: banking

Swedbank AS

Foreign Shareholder: Swedbank

Country of origin: Sweden

Sector of operation: banking

Eesti Telekom AS

Foreign Shareholder: TeliaSonera AB

Country of origin: Sweden

Sector of operation: telecommunications

ABB AS

Foreign Shareholder: The ABB Group

Country of origin: Switzerland

Sector of operation: power and automation technologies

Ericsson Eesti AS

Foreign Shareholder: Ericsson

Country of origin: Sweden

Sector of operation: telecommunications equipment

Skype Technologies OU

Foreign Shareholder: Skype Technologies S.A.

Country of origin: Luxembourg

Sector of operation: telecommunication

Stockmann AS

Foreign Shareholder: Stockmann

Country of origin: Finland

Sector of operation: retail

Genovique Specialties AS
Foreign Shareholder: Genovique Specialties Holdings
Country of origin: USA
Sector of operation: chemicals

Balti Spoon AS
Foreign Shareholder: Mohring Group of Companies,
Country of origin: USA
Sector of operation: veneer

Estonian Cell AS
Foreign Shareholder: Heinzl Group
Country of origin: Austria
Sector of operation: pulp mill

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

Bank of Estonia: <http://www.eestipank.info>
Financial Supervision Authority: <http://www.fi.ee/?lang=en>
Enterprise Estonia: <http://www.investinestonia.com>, <http://www.tradewithestonia.com/>
Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.vm.ee/eng/kat_131/

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 7: Trade and Project Financing

- [How Do I Get Paid \(Methods of Payment\)](#)
- [How Does the Banking System Operate](#)
- [Foreign-Exchange Controls](#)
- [U.S. Banks and Local Correspondent Banks](#)
- [Project Financing](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

How Do I Get Paid (Methods of Payment)

[Return to top](#)

All methods of payment are used except checks.

Credit Rating Service: www.krediidinfo.ee

Collection agencies: <http://www.arikataloog.ee/ari.php?lang=en&parent=1140A>

How Does the Banking System Operate

[Return to top](#)

Please use this link to find [Information on Estonian Capital Markets](#).

Foreign-Exchange Controls

[Return to top](#)

The Estonian kroon is included in the Exchange Rate Mechanism II (ERM II).

U.S. Banks and Local Correspondent Banks

[Return to top](#)

There are no U.S. banks in Estonia.

List of banks in Estonia:

http://www.eestipank.info/pub/en/ylidine/pank/finantskeskkond/kommertspangad/Lits_ind_ex.html

Project Financing

[Return to top](#)

EU financial assistance programs provide a wide array of grants, loans, loan guarantees and co-financing for feasibility studies and infrastructure projects in a number of key sectors (e.g., environmental, transportation, energy, telecommunications, tourism, public health). From a commercial perspective, these initiatives create significant market opportunities for U.S. businesses, U.S.-based suppliers, and subcontractors.

For information on financing your project with EU structural funds, see:

www.struktuurifondid.ee

Estonian websites:

Bank of Estonia: <http://www.eestipank.info/pub/en/>

Credit Information: www.kredinfo.ee

EU Structural funds in Estonia: www.struktuurifondid.ee

EU websites:

EU regional policies, EU Structural and Cohesion Funds:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm

Trans-European Networks (TENs): http://ec.europa.eu/ten/transport/index_en.htm

EU Grants and Loans index: http://ec.europa.eu/grants/index_en.htm

European Investment Bank: <http://www.eib.org/>

EIB-financed projects: <http://www.eib.org/projects/index.htm?lang=-en>.

EIB's i2i (Innovation 2010 Initiative):

http://www.eib.org/Attachments/thematic/innovation_2010_initiative_en.pdf

U.S. websites:

Export-Import Bank of the United States: <http://www.exim.gov>

Country Limitation Schedule: http://www.exim.gov/tools/country/country_limits.html

OPIC: <http://www.opic.gov>

SBA's Office of International Trade: <http://www.sba.gov/oit/>

USDA Commodity Credit Corporation: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ccc/default.htm>

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 8: Business Travel

- [Business Customs](#)
- [Travel Advisory](#)
- [Visa Requirements](#)
- [Telecommunications](#)
- [Transportation](#)
- [Language](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays](#)
- [Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

Business Customs

[Return to top](#)

Estonia is a modern country that enjoys close relations with Nordic and other Baltic countries. Social and business protocol is similar to that in northern Europe. More info: <http://www.tradewithestonia.com/>

Travel Advisory

[Return to top](#)

The climate in Tallinn is characterized by a fairly cold winter, a cool spring with little precipitation, a moderately warm summer and a long and rainy autumn. However, some summers have weeks at a stretch of temperatures around +30° C, and a warm, sunny summer can keep autumn at bay until mid-October.

Average temperature in July +20°C

Average temperature in February -9°C

Weather forecast on the Internet: <http://www.weather.ee/>

More info: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1112.html

Visa Requirements

[Return to top](#)

Estonia is covered by the [Schengen Treaty](#). To live and work in Estonia, foreigners from non-EU countries need both a residence permit and a work permit, both of which may be obtained from local Migration Department offices. English-language instructions on how to apply are available from the Migration Department. Alternatively, instructions are posted in English on the web page of Enterprise Estonia www.investinestonia.com.

U.S. citizens do not need to obtain a visa for visits of less than 90 days.

U.S. Companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should be advised that security options are handled via an interagency process. Visa applicants should go to the following links.

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/index.html>

United States Visas.gov: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>

US Embassy Consular Section in Estonia: <http://www.usemb.ee/>

Telecommunications

[Return to top](#)

Within a short time, modern means of communication have become an inseparable part of the daily life of Estonians, and the use of mobile telephones (GSM) and the Internet is more widespread than in most EU member states. Nearly 100 percent of Estonians have a mobile phone and about 69% of the population between 16-74 uses the Internet. [Wi-Fi](#) is widely spread and usually free.

Transportation

[Return to top](#)

Estonia has a relatively well-developed transportation infrastructure. The density of Estonia's road network is comparable to that of the Nordic countries, although the quality of the roads in many places is not yet up to Nordic standards. Public transportation in major cities is efficient and reliable. While there are five passenger-serving airports in Estonia, most international flights occur through Tallinn Airport. For more info: visitestonia.com

Language

[Return to top](#)

The official language in Estonia is Estonian. English is widely spoken, especially in the capital city. Russian is still the most-widely spoken second language, although less so among younger Estonians.

Health

[Return to top](#)

Estonia has vigorously and quite successfully reformed its health care system over recent decades. The current system is built on solidarity-based health financing; a modern provider network based on family medicine-centered primary healthcare, modern hospital services, and more concentration on public health. This has resulted in a steadily increasing life expectancy and continuously high rates of population satisfaction with access and quality. Estonian hospitals are generally well equipped with modern x-ray sets, computed tomography systems, magnetic resonance tomography systems etc.

Cases of resistant strains of tuberculosis have been reported in Estonia. Visitors to forested areas in warm weather should also guard against tick-borne encephalitis. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's website at <http://www.who.int/en> Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith>

Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

[Return to top](#)

Time Zone: GMT + 2 hours

Business hours are between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Supermarkets and shopping centers are generally open between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. every day.

The national holidays in Estonia for 2010 are:

Day, Date	Holiday
Friday, January 1	New Year's Day
Wednesday, February 24	Independence Day
Friday, April 2	Good Friday
Saturday, May 1	May Day
Wednesday, June 23	Victory Day
Thursday, June 24	Midsummer Day
Friday, August 20	Day of Restoration of Independence
Friday, December 24	Christmas Eve
Saturday, December 25	Christmas Day
Sunday, December 26	Boxing Day

Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings

[Return to top](#)

[Information on Temporary Entry](#)

Estonian Customs: <http://www.emta.ee/?id=1939>

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

Estonian Customs: <http://www.emta.ee/?id=1939>

Travel info: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1112.html

Weather forecast in Internet: <http://www.weather.ee/>

Enterprise Estonia: www.investinestonia.com.

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/index.html>

United States Visas: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>

U.S. Embassy Consular Section: www.usemb.ee

World Health Organization's website at <http://www.who.int/en>

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 9: Contacts, Market Research, and Trade Events

- [Contacts](#)
- [Market Research](#)

- [Trade Events](#)

Contacts

[Return to top](#)

United States Embassy, Political/Economic Section
 Kentmanni 20, 15099 Tallinn, Estonia
 Tel: 372 668 8130
 Fax: 372 668 8264
 Contact: Ms. Reese Sepp, Economic/Commercial Assistant
 E-mail: seppe@state.gov
 Brian Frere, Economic Officer
 E-mail: FrereBM@state.gov
www.usemb.ee

Foreign Commercial Service Partnership Post
 U.S. Embassy Helsinki
 It. Puistotie 14 B
 FIN-00140
 Helsinki, Finland
 Tel: 358-9-616-250
 Fax: 358-9-616-25130
 E-mail: helsinki.office.box@mail.doc.gov

Foreign Agricultural Service (regional office in Warsaw):
<http://poland.usembassy.gov/poland/agric.html>

Chambers of Commerce, Trade Associations

Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: www.koda.ee
 American Chamber of Commerce, Estonia: www.amcham.ee
 Association of Estonian Food Industry: <http://toiduliit.ee/>
 BSA (Business Software Alliance): www.bsa.ee
 Estonian Banking Association: www.pangaliit.ee
 Federation of Estonian Engineering Industry (EML): <http://www.emliit.ee/>

Country Government Offices

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications: www.mkm.ee
 Ministry of Agriculture: <http://www.agri.ee/>
 Ministry of Finance: <http://www.fin.ee/>
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.ee>
 Other Ministries and Government Agencies: <http://www.eesti.ee/eng/>

Market Research

[Return to top](#)

To view market research reports produced by the U.S. Commercial Service please go to the following website: <http://www.export.gov/mrktresearch/index.asp> and click on Country and Industry Market Reports.

Please note that these reports are only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. companies. Registration to the site is required, but free of charge.

Trade Events

[Return to top](#)

Please click on the link below for information on upcoming trade events.

<http://www.export.gov/tradeevents.html>

Estonian Fairs: www.fair.ee

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 10: Guide to Our Services

The U.S. Commercial Service offers customized solutions to help your business enter and succeed in markets worldwide. The global network of trade specialists will work one-on-one with you through every step of the exporting process, helping you to:

- Target the best markets with our world-class research
- Promote your products and services to qualified buyers
- Meet the best distributors and agents for your products and services
- Overcome potential challenges or trade barriers

For more information on the services the U.S. Commercial Service offers U.S. businesses in Estonia, please click on the link below.

<http://www.usemb.ee/serv1.php>

[Return to table of contents](#)

U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information should consult with their nearest **Export Assistance Center** or the **U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center** at (800) USA-TRADE, or go to the following website: <http://www.export.gov>

To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate as of the date published. However, **The Department of Commerce** does not take responsibility for actions readers may take based on the information contained herein. Readers should always conduct their own due diligence before entering into business ventures or other commercial arrangements. **The Department of Commerce** can assist companies in these endeavors.